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Tribute to Bob Yegge

TRIBUTE TO BOB YEGGE

JOHN E. MOYE[†]

Bob Yegge's cookouts on Yegge Peak were legendary, with specially "flavored" steaks and beans and entertainment provided by the participants, including mandolins and piano concerts, and Bob's special hospitality. All of his friends remember Bob on their favorite Yegge Peak excursion. Other friends remember his masquerade as Santa Claus every Christmas, visiting his friends' homes with a genuine "ho ho ho" that only Bob could produce from his commanding, senatorial voice. The joy he brought to the children of the homes he visited was remembered tearfully by those paying their respects at his services. His act as Santa Claus was reportedly even recognized in the record of the United States Supreme Court.¹ Other friends remember Bob's generosity and spirit, noting his philanthropy to animal causes and his participation in multiple civic and community activities. And there was Bob's style—charismatic, bombastic, cheerful, and genuine. He filled the room when he came in, and his infectious laugh was his trademark. His vanity license plate said "Harump"—his tongue-in-cheek way of jovially dismissing the world.²

Bob will be remembered for all of those characteristics, but an essay about him in the *Denver University Law Review* should remember him most for his commitment to legal education and the administration of courts and the legal profession.

I served as Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs when Bob Yegge was the Dean during the 1970s. His vision for the College of Law was to assemble an all-star faculty who were prominently recognized for their respective specialties. He recruited outstanding scholars, such as Bill Beaney, Eli Jarmel, and Ved Nanda. He identified and hired outstanding teachers, such as Jan Laitos, Frank Jamison, and Jim Winokur. He gained the respect and admiration of the faculty he inherited, including the legendary Professor Thompson Marsh,

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1. Reportedly, when Bob Yegge appeared before the United States Supreme Court and introduced himself, Associate Justice Byron White interrupted him to ask if he had ever been known by an alias. "In my house," the Justice said, "he is known as Santa Claus."

2. The word "harumph" is defined as "[a]n expression of disdain, disbelief, protest, refusal or dismissal." Wiktionary, <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/harumph>. The abbreviated version of the word on the license plate was a product of a limitation on Colorado license plates to only six characters.

who had been teaching at the Law School since 1927. I admired the care with which Bob worked with his faculty members to encourage and inspire them to achieve academic excellence. He also had the wisdom to appoint a businessman as Associate Dean for Financial Affairs. Jack Hanley administered the financial affairs under Bob's guidance, and the law school was a very profitable division of the University. During the years I served with Bob, faculty meetings were uniformly congenial and supportive, and he was masterful at seeking and obtaining compromise and consensus. His faculty was his family, and he nurtured and supported them like a parent. I never knew him to make a commitment that he could not fulfill, and he insisted that the University Administration provide resources for his faculty and administrators to thrive.

In the administration of a law school, Bob Yegge was both an innovator and a visionary. He pioneered diversity in the law school population, and began preparatory programs for Hispanic students to encourage and prepare them for the rigors of their legal education. He knew that diversity in the student body was necessary to bring real-world experiences into the classroom. Programs copying the Yegge model were adopted in other law schools nationally. Today, the Sturm College of Law celebrates leading statistics for diverse classes, and many students seek their legal education here precisely because of the diverse student body. The Law School also boasts that an early participant in Yegge's innovative diversity program, Patricio Serna, became the Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court.

Under Yegge's deanship, the Law School began experimenting with interdisciplinary education and the curriculum included a series of courses that involved faculty from other colleges at the University. Over the years, the variety of interdisciplinary offerings at the Law School expanded and many students realized that their legal education could be significantly supplemented with the study of other disciplines. Some forty years later, the Sturm College of Law has adopted a strategic plan for its law curriculum that highlights an extensive component of interdisciplinary courses and the desirability of an interdisciplinary approach to the practice of law.

One of Bob Yegge's greatest contributions to the legal profession was his leadership in establishing the master's degree program in Judicial and Legal Administration ("MSJA/MSLA"). Over thirty-five years ago, Bob recognized the need to develop law-related professions and occupations, particularly with respect to court and law firm administration. Together with Professor Harry Lawson, Bob created a curriculum to train professional court managers and administrators. Their work was recognized in a national program sponsored by the American Bar Association that led to the creation of the Institute of Court Management, which Yegge graciously (and cleverly) agreed to host at the University of Den-

ver. His own words illustrate his visionary attitude toward the utility of this unique course of study:

The philosophy of judicial administration at DU has been, and still is, that a number of disciplines, besides law, have valuable roles in determining what justice is, the factors affecting it, how you get it, how you know when you get it, and how you keep it. In short, the general political, social, and economic environment in which a judicial system or court functions constitutes the proper subject matter of judicial administration in the broadest sense.³

Bob's commitment to orderly and competent judicial administration produced a star in the crown of the University of Denver as the MSJA/MSLA degree program has been a model for other programs in the burgeoning industry of judicial and law firm administration throughout the country. In many ways, this innovative, comprehensive program is Bob's legacy to the legal profession and the courts, allowing lawyers and judges to do their jobs while interdisciplinary-trained court and law firm administrators manage the business of justice.

When it came to selecting and supporting a faculty, pioneering programs to ensure a diverse student body, developing interdisciplinary legal education, and creating an innovative curriculum for law firm and court administrators, it is not difficult to describe Bob's contribution. Paraphrasing his own words, he knew what it was, he knew how to get it, he knew it when he had it, and he knew how to keep it.

As we miss Bob as a great friend, we will also miss him greatly as a colleague.

3. Robert B. Yegge, *Thirty-five Years and Still Counting*, 26 JUST. SYS. J. 186, 187 (2005).

